

From *Asceticism and Society in Crisis*:

John of Ephesus and the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*,

by Susan Ashbrook Harvey (Los Angeles, 1990).

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## PREFACE

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The Mediterranean world of late antiquity has in recent years gained popularity with scholars and the lay public both. A lacuna has been present in our studies thus far, however, in the case of a major and compelling writer from this era, John of Ephesus. Living in the sixth century, John led a varied career as a Monophysite monk, missionary, writer, and church leader. Two significant works by John remain extant: his *Ecclesiastical History* and his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. John wrote in Syriac and his focus is often the eastern Byzantine provinces, especially his homeland Mesopotamia. But John's career took him throughout the empire of his day, and he knew the imperial court of Constantinople as intimately as he knew the villages of Amida's regions. John's writings are important in part because they concern a personal encounter with the full Byzantine world of his time, and in part because few writers from late antiquity have opened that world so vividly as he.

John lived through the period spanning the Monophysite movement's greatest successes and defeats. In his youth the Monophysites represented a formidable source of energy and creativity in the Byzantine realm; in his old age, John saw them not simply defeated but stalemated: discredited by the Chalcedonians on the Byzantine throne and incapacitated by their own internal bickerings. Within and beyond this frame of activity were the people of John's world. For John's home, the eastern provinces of Byzantium, the sixth century was above all a time of suffering. Their lands provided the battleground for war between Byzantium and Persia. Their monasteries and church communities, Monophy-

site in faith, endured persecutions by the Chalcedonian government. Famine and plague were chronically ubiquitous. It was a century when tragedy both accountable and capricious was the fabric of daily life.

John has received uneven treatment by modern scholars. Appreciation for his significance was first shown in the pamphlet by J. P. N. Land, *Joannes Bischof von Ephesos der erste syrische Kirchenhistoriker* (Leiden, 1856). Subsequent studies culminated in the monumental work of A. Djakonov, *Ioann Efesskiy* (Petrograd, 1908)—still the only monograph devoted to John. Further efforts followed, primarily textual, and critical editions of John's writings were published in the 1920s and 1930s, accompanied by translations into English for the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* and into Latin for the *Ecclesiastical History*. Nonetheless, John's works continued to be utilized mainly by Syriac scholars, while historians of the late Roman and early Byzantine periods persisted in sidestepping his contribution.

In recent decades, however, scholars of late antiquity have turned to a more comprehensive treatment of the materials available to us, and a greater appreciation for Syriac sources has been apparent. An upsurge in the interest shown for John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History* has accompanied this wider view, and not least because John's records contrast with the contemporary accounts of the Greek literati.

For the most part, John's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* have not shared the limelight. The *Lives* have been used primarily for the information they contain about certain key figures and events in the ecclesiastical crises of the sixth century. Such selective treatment bypasses both what John's *Lives* are about and what they have to offer—as may be seen in two notable exceptions to this situation, Peter Brown's "Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways" and Evelyn Patlagean's *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e–7e siècle*.

This study is an attempt to bring John's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* into view. They provide a different perspective from that of his *History*. Rather than a chronological record of important events, one finds here what is often lacking in such records: the daily world of ordinary people, and how they coped with war, plague, famine, and persecution. Here one sees, above all, Syrian asceticism fully developed. Its practitioners are at home in the small world of the villager, and sometimes, too, in the larger one of the imperial court. But the Syrian ascetics also reflected their times. By the end of the sixth century, even the vitality of this movement had been worn down.

John of Ephesus and his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* provide an opportunity to learn about life in a time and place of drastic events. Here we

can see the ways in which those who have chosen extreme lives are forced by external circumstances into extremities even more severe. In writing the stories of holy men and women whom he had known, John shows us the confrontation between extreme experience and the human necessity of shaping that experience through narrative.

The hesitation that scholars have shown in the instance of John's *Lives* in fact stems largely from its literary form. For despite John's personal acquaintance with his subjects, and despite his professed intention to record in the *Lives* only what he himself has seen or can verify, hagiography alters both an author's material and its presentation. The nature of hagiography does not invalidate the historicity of John's *Lives*, but it does require that we read the text with a particular understanding.

Hagiography is a literary genre in which form is as important as content in understanding the text. Its task is to render the world of human experience comprehensible. It does this in two ways: first, by celebrating the saint (whether real or legendary) as one through whom God acted in the realm of human life; and second, by using a standardized language of literary *topoi* that identified the saint as saint and interpreted the saint's work as that of divine agency. Recognizing the formulaic, non-historical language of hagiography opens the route for treating the standardization itself as historical material. These texts offer us historical information, even in the most stringent sense, only if we can ask the appropriate questions. Standardization in hagiographical language is not a static matter. Favorite themes change; and the criteria of sanctity itself change in accordance with fluctuations in the values of society. Standard hagiographical themes, their periods of fashion and forms of expression, reveal the subconscious concerns of their societies and serve to establish a larger sense of order for those whom they are written to guide.

How, then, can we approach hagiography so as to evaluate the interaction of formulaic and historical material? The text must be heard on its own terms as well as in its hagiographical context; one must separate the standardized material from the author's perspective and establish how and why the author is using the hagiographic medium. There are clues internal to the text: the author's style, emphases, choices and viewpoints, and the author's position as distinct from the subject's. There are also external clues by which to measure the internal evidence: other sources—hagiographical, archaeological, archival, historiographical—and other information can be brought to bear upon the text. The consistency and coherence of a text, the interplay between an author's intent and content, analyses of comparative and contrasting material—all of

these matters are tools by which we can listen more carefully to a text. In the listening, we can discern what the text is saying, and what we can learn from it.

John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints* is a work of hagiography in the historical rather than the legendary tradition of saints' lives. Unlike many works of this kind, John's collection is not primarily stereotyped or didactic. It is a work incorporating a strikingly personal element, as John not only participated in much of what he sets down but also is actively present in his role as author. In the present study, John himself stands at the center. As will be seen, his individualistic manner is constantly apparent; more than a matter of style, John produces a form of hagiography peculiarly his own. His circumstances do much to encourage his individuality.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship and interaction between asceticism and society in the sixth-century Byzantine East. In particular, we are concerned with how this relationship works for the Monophysite ascetics, what factors influenced it, and what the consequences and implications may have been.

How do we see the particular historical circumstances reflected in the ascetic experience John describes hagiographically? As John tells us, it was a time when stylites descended from their pillars to enter the arena of religious controversy; anchorites returned to towns and cities to care for the laity in the absence of exiled church leaders; exile became a part of monastic practice; the needs of the laity overrode the sentiments of bishops in the formation of a separate church hierarchy; and women took leadership roles they would otherwise have shunned. The situation of religious controversy was compounded by war with Persians, invasions by Huns, extended famine, bubonic plague, and collective hysteria. We can see the contrast of Mesopotamia in its calamity with the expansion and prosperity experienced elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire during the first half of the sixth century; we can see also the contrast of provincial life to that of the cosmopolitan centers, whether Antioch, Jerusalem, or Constantinople. Our goal here is to break the religious experience down into its component parts, in search of the meaning ascribed to the larger event.

Establishing the historicity of John's text is thus neither the methodology nor the point of this study, nor does it attempt to prove a thesis. Rather, it seeks to see a situation: What is the story John tells? How are we to understand it? This is not a book about John of Ephesus as a historian. I chose to write about his *Lives* because they are not the history of his time but rather the story of the people who live in his world. I will

utilize his *Ecclesiastical History* only as a complementary supplement to the *Lives*. My purpose is to understand what Syriac spirituality meant to these people, both those who practiced an ascetic career and those who did not.

Consequently, this is also not a book about the Monophysite movement, nor is its originating point of reference the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Rather, the point of origin is Syrian asceticism, its roots and development. In this particular instance, the ascetics are also Monophysites. While the church crisis colored their situation, as the book emphasizes, they are not themselves the entire Monophysite body (far from it), nor are they the reason for the separation of the churches. Their spirituality, their asceticism, and their responses to the crises of their times do not depend on their Monophysitism but rather on their Syriac heritage. The continuity of that heritage is ultimately more important than the change brought by persecution.

Because the material is generally unfamiliar to scholars and students of late antiquity, this study starts with an introduction to the Syrian Orient of the sixth century. I do this by focusing on particular texts that illustrate the themes important for John of Ephesus; there is a context in which the ascetic practice John records makes sense in practical as well as symbolical terms. Syrian asceticism did not develop through a sequence of events. It developed in a collective experience, in which individuals and communities pursued a variety of goals for various reasons. The people rather than the events were the determining factors, and they overlapped, clashed, and harmonized in patterns rather than in a clear progression. The same is true of the spirituality studied in this book. Events affected it and forced people to make certain decisions or changes; those circumstances are central to this study insofar as they reveal the people and their spirituality more clearly.

The first chapter then introduces John himself, his writings, and the literary issues of the *Lives*. The following chapters focus on those events that shaped John's collection: the development of asceticism in a time of crisis (chapter 2); the plague of madness in the city of Amida, as a collective societal response to the years of calamity (chapter 3); the impact of exile on monastic practice, and the functioning of monastic communities as refugee camps (chapter 4); mission, the breakdown of Byzantine imperial ideology in the East, and the formation of separate churches (chapter 5); the fluctuating position of women (chapter 6); and, finally, an assessment of John's hagiographical purpose (chapter 7).

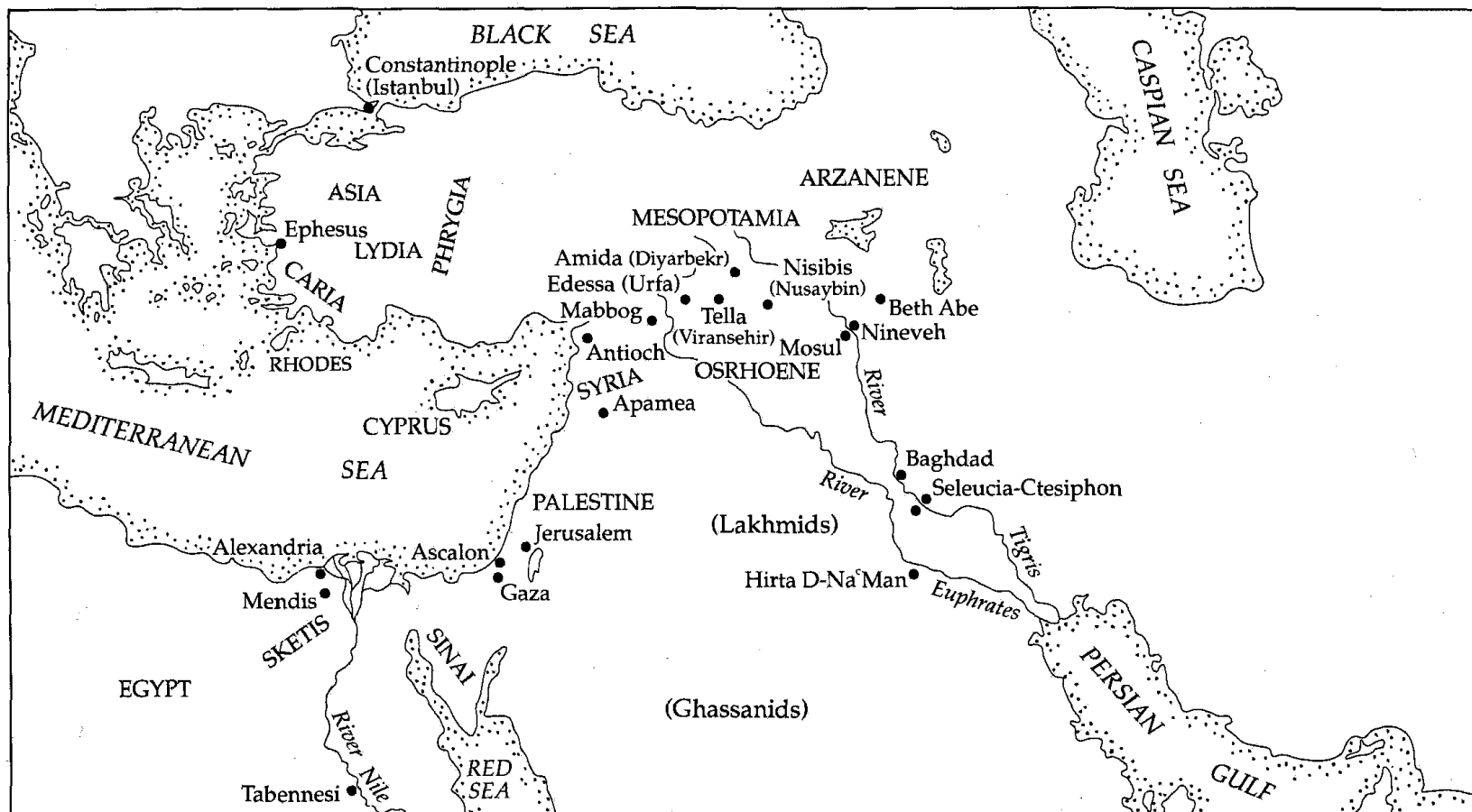
In using John's *Lives* to the end, we will work with the awareness that John is writing hagiography for a specific reason and with a specific

intent. In order to see what John is doing and how and why he does it, the *Lives* will be treated throughout this study together with contrasting and complementary writings of late antiquity, both Greek and Syriac. We will seek to clarify the singular experience contained in the work. These are particular people in a particular world. To see them on their own terms and to hear their story as truly theirs is to touch history as a living thing.

Hagiography is about a theology of activity. The careers of the saints are one expression of this theology. The writing of hagiography is another.

Since no one can speak for John of Ephesus better than he himself, I have illustrated this study with his own words as much as possible. For the most part I quote from the translation of E. W. Brooks, though occasionally I have altered the text or, where noted, substituted my own.





John of Ephesus's World

## · II ·

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### "LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN": THE ASCETIC VISION

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#### JOHN OF EPHESUS: THE ASCETIC MODEL

John portrays an asceticism clearly rooted in early Syrian tradition. His ascetics live within easy access of lay people and are actively involved in the affairs of the community. His ascetics also maintain a degree of individuality even when not living as hermits; the holy one may live in a monastic community, or as a master with one or two disciples; he or she may live in solitude most of the time, or in the heart of the city. Yet in each case, the holy one pursues a personal practice, a private as well as public religious discipline. By the sixth century, Syrian asceticism was a constant presence in the daily life of the eastern provinces of the empire. For John of Ephesus, this activity represents a reconciliation of the two poles of vocational life, service and contemplation, and that reconciliation takes place within the holy one's own person. He will not separate social and religious need.

Thus John's portrait indicates some developments in perspective by both the ascetic and the hagiographer. It is important to understand what holiness means for John; his subjects are inspired by love for the divine and are also themselves agents for divine activity in the world. But John does not set them outside the realm of the human, as other authors sometimes did.<sup>1</sup> These holy men and women are very human; John might say truly human.

In his first two chapters, on the lives of Habib and his disciple Z'ura,

John lays out his map. We are faced with a venerable tradition of serious import for the functioning of society. Habib was a holy man from the district of Sophanene, near the territory of Amida.<sup>2</sup> From the age of ten, he received his training under the direction of a great solitary. He went on to become a politically efficacious figure, perhaps most noted for debt remission and causing the downfall of landowners and moneylenders. Whether for zeal or didacticism, John tells us that the wicked who opposed Habib suffered cruel fates for their acts of pride, so that even when Habib tried to intercede for them, divine retribution struck them down.

Nonetheless, John casts a particular light on Habib's work. In the first chapter, John in effect defines ascetic practice as public service:

From his boyhood and through his old age he retained his humility and obedience which also distinguished him, so that [if] a widow or poor woman or poor man begged him to go with him on any business whatever, he did not, as a man of high reputation [would], refuse to go, but, in order to satisfy him, would go with him at once.<sup>3</sup>

Nor was there a task too menial for his attention. When a poor widow who taught drawing for a living was faced with two students who refused to pay their fee, she turned naturally to Habib, "because everyone who was defrauded whether of little or of much had recourse to the holy Habib as to a deliverer of those who were wronged."<sup>4</sup>

But for all his praise, John does not present Habib as the sole actor in the drama, or as the sole agent. A barren woman proved to be as essential as the holy man himself in effecting her own cure, just as Christ had demonstrated in the Gospels: she conceived because of Habib's prayers and because "she believed."<sup>5</sup>

John's account of Habib also indicates the way in which asceticism grew in the Syrian Orient: in depth it grew through the disciples who came after the holy one; in breadth it stretched as far as the holy one traveled. Hence, Habib was a holy man working through a wide area of Syria,<sup>6</sup> but his chief disciple was the monk Z'ura, who carried on after the old man's death to become a stylite and to spread his works far from his homeland.<sup>7</sup> Z'ura's story picks up where Habib's ends. He inherited his master's vision and his work. His change in the manner of his practice did not draw him away from the cares of society. Rather,

thenceforth the deeds of power and healings of his master were performed through him. For, after he had gone up on the column, and it was accordingly no longer in his power to grasp paralysed persons with his hands and bend them and cure the sick, they used to give him water and he used to pronounce a blessing, and wherever it fell a cure was not long in following.<sup>8</sup>

Z'ura was forced down from his pillar by the Chalcedonian persecutors, yet he continued undeterred. Responding to the crisis, he traveled to Constantinople on behalf of the Monophysites and there took up residence in a monastic community. His influence soon became widespread, and John would have it that even the imperial court paid him great respect. Z'ura's ascetic labors had thus taken him away from his roots but not from the teachings of Habib. In the trusted tradition of spiritual father and disciple, John likens their relationship to that of the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha. They were men strictly and carefully trained in their practice, but they did not question that certain responsibilities were attendant upon their chosen vocation. Their asceticism was not a separation from the temporal world but a commitment to work within it. The pattern John lays down in his "Life of Habib," and expands in his "Life of Z'ura," reechoes throughout his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. John's ascetics act out a life of service central to their ascetic vow, and not an inadvertent result of it. A different tone predominates to that which had come before. Service is inherent in, rather than a by-product of, the ascetic's practice.

Such an emphasis raises other issues for John, especially with regard to other inherited traditions. In particular, the self-mortification that characterized the asceticism of the Syrian Orient seemed to John now less important. So much does he look to good works that he sees extreme asceticism as a distraction from, rather than an aid for, the task of devotion to God. John's concern here, as always, is pragmatic. He urges time and again, as in the case of the holy woman Euphemia, that one can better serve others if one does not punish oneself so cruelly.<sup>9</sup> In a case such as Z'ura's, where the stylite's works of service are an integral part of ascetic practice, John stands back. But in a situation where the ascetic's practice seems confined to a contrived harshness, John intervenes. In his view, there are needs more pressing than the private mourning of such activities.

Such, for example, was the case of Harfat, from the district of Anzetene.<sup>10</sup> Harfat had withdrawn to a life of solitude after a brush with unsavory church politics. "Because he was very simple," Harfat hung "great heavy irons" on his neck, hands, and feet and then settled on a mountainside. He nearly died of exposure until a woman took pity on him and built him a hut for protection. John of Ephesus came along soon after and pressured the hermit.

What regulation commands this matter of the irons to be carried out?  
 . . . If we seek to humble our body to the earth, cannot we humble it  
 without irons? . . . We wish you to throw off these irons, which are a

useless burden, and lade yourself instead of them with the burden of labours performed with knowledge, and thus you will please God.<sup>11</sup>

John defines asceticism as utter devotion to God, and so to God's commandments alone. Those who had defended Simeon the Stylite's choice of ascetic practice did so on the basis of Old Testament parallels.<sup>12</sup> John understands what he sees, too, in Old Testament terms, as he shows in the case of Habib and Z'ura. But for John of Ephesus, the model divinely ordained for prophet or for disciple also recalled a ministry among the needy, and, as Habib had demonstrated, one that answered to distress without concern for society's dictates or institutions. With a basic criterion of God-centered service, John finds his subjects in settings and circumstances of wide diversity.

## HOLY CAREERS: VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Nowhere is John's admiration more apparent than when he writes of those persons who endure abstinence and self-mortification, and also channel that same zeal back into the "real world." In his eyes, the responsibility for commitment lies with the ascetic. Where Theodoret had portrayed holy men and women acting on behalf of those who approached them, John is clear that his ascetics act not only because an afflicted populace seeks them out but also because they hold themselves accountable for the society around them. They are not passive in their role as benefactors.

An example is John's "Life of Addai the Chorepiscopus."<sup>13</sup> Addai had been chorepiscopus in the territory of Anzetene on the Armenian frontier, responsible for the discipline of clergy and monastic communities in the region, at the same time caring for the poor, orphans, and widows. Evicted from his own monastery during the Monophysite persecutions, he decided to become an anchorite in the mountains to the east. For the next twenty-five years, Addai lived as a recluse in the wilderness, seeing only a few attendants and running from any other visitors who tried to approach him (as John himself unhappily discovered).

But Addai did not give up contact with his monastery, which he had enjoined to care for those in need. Over the first five years of his seclusion, however, the monastery was plundered repeatedly by the Chalcodonians and fell to ruin. Addai was beside himself:

And the blessed man was grieved and distressed on account of the starving and distressed persons for whom there was no method of providing, and further, the inmates of his monastery also were pressed by

want, then he considered, "There is no longer any quarter from which it is possible for me to provide for my brethren, except that the blessed men should come and make a vineyard in these mountains, and it will be a provision for them and for the needy."<sup>14</sup>

So the brothers planted a vineyard on Addai's mountain, and it soon prospered—even the Cappadocians would travel there for wine.

Thenceforth the anxieties of the holy Addai that had been troubling him because he had nothing in his possession wherewith to provide for the poor were much relieved, since he would send from forty and fifty *denarii*, and as many as came in from that vineyard, and buy clothes and distribute them to the needy, and similarly also corn and oil, and many articles.<sup>15</sup>

Thus Addai passed his years as a mountain recluse, withdrawn from human contact, yet shrewdly running a profitable business for the service of others.

Often John indicates that his subjects lived as anchorites at an early stage in their career—presented by John as a testing ground for the responsibilities to come—and then continued to lead a privately austere life while conducting public business. For John, such a pattern is sufficiently ritualized to represent a rite of passage. Having withdrawn from the world, the ascetic reemerges into it as a more potent force,<sup>16</sup> though this is not necessarily the intent of the holy one. Abraham the Recluse was an old man of sixty when he decided to take religious vows.<sup>17</sup> Leaving his wife and children, he sought tonsure at a monastery where he was received despite his age.<sup>18</sup> Then to everyone's surprise, the newly tonsured Abraham immured himself in a small oratory at the edge of his village.

For eight years Abraham prayed and wept in solitude, receiving a little food once each week. Many who at first had scorned his purpose were in turn astonished by his perseverance. In his eighth year he received his reward, shortly before his death. It seemed that hail storms had ruined the local villagers' crops for a number of years, but in this year Abraham saw people weeping as the storm approached. Immediately he prayed, "My Lord, if thou hast been pleased with the sinner's repentance, and thy mercy has declared of me that I shall not perish, let not this cloud come within the boundaries of this village."<sup>19</sup> The storm clouds passed on, leaving the village unharmed. The power of Abraham's prayer was acclaimed, and he died in peace soon after.

At times John's concern for the welfare of ordinary people determined his choice of subjects with surprising results. Perhaps most explicit in implication is the story of the two brothers Elijah and Theo-

dore.<sup>20</sup> These two men were traders and decided as their ascetic vow to run their business honestly, without deceit or contention (an interesting comment on sixth-century business). For their efforts they were generously rewarded; as John tells us, "When God saw their zeal, he caused everything to which they put their hand to increase abundantly. . . . And thus a blessing rested on everything that passed through their hands."<sup>21</sup> They used their copious earnings to establish hostels and monasteries, wherein they and their families took up residence and ministered to great numbers of people. Similarly, Elijah of Dara had practiced a rigorous asceticism privately, although a wealthy man; and he publicly served the poor and destitute, both before and after his banishment into exile during the persecutions.<sup>22</sup>

The public, in the meantime, was well aware of the advantages it gained from these holy works. The form of patronage that ascetics of the fourth and fifth centuries had made available to the common populace was now standard in practice.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, people had come to perceive the amplification of powers and possibilities made accessible to them by the summary temporal and spiritual authority of the ascetics as theirs by right as much as by need. John's subjects could not always choose to serve the world as they might wish.

The humble monk Jacob practiced asceticism in one of the Amidan monasteries and after a time was approached by persons possessed by demons. They demanded that he cure them.<sup>24</sup> Jacob did his best to avoid them, thinking that by calling for him, in particular, the demons were mocking him. Eventually, however, "under great pressure" he acted, revealing himself to be an authoritative exorcist. Soon crowds of possessed persons descended on the monastery crying out for Jacob, who tried to alleviate the suffering but soon found the situation out of all control. As the numbers of the afflicted increased, so too did the irritation of the monastic community. Jacob "wished to give up this business, and could not, on account of the multitude who used to come. And in consequence of such annoyances it became necessary for him to withdraw from the community."<sup>25</sup>

Jacob fled with another monk and together they established themselves as recluses in a different village. "But in a similar way again there also multitudes began to flock together to them."<sup>26</sup> Left with no choice, Jacob set up a private chapel for exorcism, a sort of clinic, in which he served his public well.

More amenably, John tells of Abraham and Addai, two monks who had trained together and decided to travel about setting up monasteries.<sup>27</sup> On their first attempt, "They asked for iron tools. . . . And,

when the people of the district saw and heard it, they repaired to them from all quarters, providing money and wood and everything that was useful."<sup>28</sup> In time, over the course of twenty-five years, these two brothers erected and set underway twelve monasteries in various regions.<sup>29</sup> It was a happy case of mutual benefit to both populace and ascetic.

Thus John's basic model for the ascetic allowed any number of variations to its theme, true to Syrian tradition. But the vision remained constant in each case, and it was this constancy that John sought to glorify by presenting diverse ascetic forms of unified understanding. In similar manner, he presented a monastic organization that had evolved a means of containing within its structure the vision that devotion to God entailed public service, while still protecting the individual ascetic's vocational form.

## MONASTICISM: AN INSTITUTION FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

By the sixth century, the ascetic's role in society had both expanded and become an orderly part of how society functioned. At the same time, asceticism itself had gained a greater sense of order. The responsibilities of discipline and work, which Theodoret portrayed as an individual's own concern, have in John of Ephesus' *Lives* become a shared affair between the ascetic and the larger monastic structure.

The monastic organization John describes and its provision for public services delineated clear patterns of authoritative response to social need. Temporal and spiritual tasks complemented each other without tarnish to the ascetic image—always a concern of the church. The monasteries ran soup kitchens and health clinics for their surrounding populace but did so in the context of an internal discipline that was both dignified and flexible. The entry process into a monastic order was long, arduous, and carefully ritualized, as John proudly describes.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, monasteries interacted through institutional canons that were respectful of each other's particular structures without creating competition.<sup>31</sup> Yet regulation did not deprive the monastic life of its moving force, or of its respect for individual vision. Hence, when Abraham the Recluse sought entry to the monastery order, his sense of purpose was allowed to override the canonical irregularities of his age and his decision to practice as a solitary outside the actual grounds of the monastery.<sup>32</sup>

Individual practice mingled with the tasks of running the monastery and its services.<sup>33</sup> The regime of the holy man Aaron, for example, involved working by day in the monastery's vineyard and gardens and re-



ceiving the visitors who called; standing through the long services; and passing his nights on a pillar rather than in bed.<sup>34</sup> Again, John the Nazirite devoted himself to hard work in the monastery's fields and eventually also to the tasks of exorcism and healing. At the same time, the brethren were distressed by the stringency of his diet, while he compounded his practice by laboring beyond the daily schedule, praying and weeping through the night, "insomuch that his eyelids shed their lashes from weeping, and the hair of his head fell off in front, from the number of times he used to knock [his head on the ground] before God in supplication."<sup>35</sup>

John's description of the Amidan monasteries by night, after their daytime ministries, is the more sobering for his admiration. In addition to those who spent the night singing psalms or practicing genuflections,

[there were] others ranged in rows and standing on standing-posts, and others who had fastened their bodies to the walls all night without standing-posts, and others who were tied to the ceiling of the room by ropes and vine branches, and were suspending themselves by them in a standing posture all night, having put them under their armpits, and others who were sitting on seats and never falling on their sides.<sup>36</sup>

Individual and community enhanced one another.

Regimentation of the ascetic life that included involvement with secular affairs was not new; Theodoret had described the schedule developed by Simeon the Stylite to cope with the demands placed on him by others, as well as the demands of his own religious vows.<sup>37</sup> What had changed was the perspective involved, and thus the manner of interaction between the ascetic and worldly realms.

Maro the Stylite provides a good example of how it all worked; his story illustrates the changes in asceticism, interaction with the world, and hagiography.<sup>38</sup> Maro came to his position of authority inadvertently, and although he did prove himself a worker of great deeds, neither he nor John—his spiritual son and biographer—ever forgot that this stylite was an ordinary human being. This is a homely portrait.

Maro had entered the monastery of Ar'a Rabtha together with his brother Abraham. Abraham became the monastery's leading stylite, and for years he served the crowds who came in need with many good works. Meantime, Maro had confined himself inside a nearby tree trunk, ignoring visitors and speaking only to his brother. But when Abraham died, Maro immediately took his place on the pillar, despite much trepidation and lack of confidence in his own position. Columns, too, had gained hereditary properties: when Maro himself passed away some years later, the column was next claimed by the presbyter who had served him.<sup>39</sup>

But when Maro ascended his brother's pillar, he faced the crowds below with difficulty.

And when he had suppressed his own tears for a short time and restrained his weeping, he then said to them: "Brethren, pray for me, and leave me alone. I for my part did not desire this and my Lord knows, but, in order that my holy brother's place may not be vacant, I hope by his prayers that, until you bring me down as he came down, I shall henceforth not come down." . . . But the blessed man would in great affliction cry night and day to God, saying, "My Lord, let not this stone be to me a conductor to torment, but a conductor to life."<sup>40</sup>

John presents little mystery about this shy and awkward ascetic and his decision to become a stylite. Indeed, Maro's first miracle, saving John's life as a baby, was seen as a bumbling and clumsy effort by all concerned—Maro, his attendants, and John's parents.<sup>41</sup> But even further, John understood Maro's work in a frame that allowed humor: "God used to work acts of great and marvelous power through him in all the words that he spoke even when laughing."<sup>42</sup>

Uncomfortable with the responsibilities that came with standing on a pillar, this stylite did his best to dispel the mystique that hung about those of his profession. He sought to temper the cult of the individual virtuoso, both for the good of the monastic community and also out of respect for the common people. He dreaded the sick and possessed who came seeking miracles and pleaded to be left alone to his human failings. He cried out to the multitudes who supplicated him, "It was because of my sins that I came up here to ask mercy like every man, not because of my righteousness. To myself the madman and man of evil life why do you come?"<sup>43</sup> As for driving out demons, Maro mourned, "Would that I were driving out my own."<sup>44</sup>

Maro did, however, warily perform services for others, though sometimes threats were required to prompt him to action. When a husband once approached the stylite on behalf of his barren wife, he obtained Maro's aid only by means of an oath: "By God who chose you do not neglect me!" The effect was instantaneous.

When [Maro] heard that [the man] adjured him by God, he was moved by two considerations, one that he did not wish to state of himself at all that he could do any such thing, and another that he heard God's name and his heart trembled; and he said to that man, "Why did you adjure me by God about a matter that is not my concern and is too hard for me?"<sup>45</sup>

But nonetheless he yielded. "And he took one of his toenails and wrapt it up and gave it to him. . . . And he said to him, 'See that no one undo and see it; . . . and next year you shall carry your son also and bring him to me.'<sup>46</sup>

Like the barren woman who had petitioned Habib, this couple "believed" in Maro's words and in the blessing he sent through the tiny packet (not knowing it was his toenail). The wife conceived and a son was duly born. Maro in fact proved himself very good at healing the sick, curing sterility, saving the village from invading Huns, and other such deeds—including the supervision of young novices like John. But John presents him as a truly humble man, one who performed his duties as best he could, embarrassed by the fanfare, and concerned that neither the ascetic's integrity nor the common person's faith be abused. One needed no intermediary to approach this holy man, as had been the case with the stylites Simeon and Daniel. Maro did not view himself as the *raison d'être* of the monastery because he was its leading stylite; instead, he seems to have seen himself simply as another part of its structure. John makes no effort to present Maro in any other way.

The power of the ascetics, then, as shown in their practices and in their patronage, had become institutionalized to a large extent. While the individual continued to constitute the focal point of Syrian asceticism, a wider structure had evolved. This provided a coherent framework in which social responsibilities were shared and performed in an organized fashion; in which monastic groups stood in a canonically defined relationship to one another and to the lay community; in which the ascetic as solitary was permitted to pursue a chosen course of practice within the monastic establishment; and, above all, in which the common people were allowed an access to the ascetic's works that was more ordered in daily regimen and less awesome in approach. The ascetic still inhabited a realm outside the temporal world but also had become settled in the midst of its society.

Nonetheless, the accretion of established custom and familiarity in no way lessened asceticism's impact on society's functioning; the crowds alone would be sufficient evidence to the contrary. Nor was passion softened for the ascetics. Rather, John would have us see that the more clearly their place in society had been defined, the more keenly they felt their duty to it.<sup>47</sup>

But alongside the institutionalization of asceticism and its place in the world, there remained a tradition of the individual's choice to pursue religious vocation under private vows and to train outside the monastic structure, under tutorship by another self-disciplined solitary. The practices of the independent ascetics, and their informal gatherings in pairs or small groups, demonstrated that the vision John of Ephesus propagated was consonant with the heritage of Syrian asceticism. His model was found here, too, in those ascetic forms least refined yet nonetheless

affected both by the position the holy man and woman had gained in society and by the understanding that the ascetic had become responsible for society. Moreover, it was this choice that prevented a loss of authority for the monastic communities, now well institutionalized; the two routes rendered each other viable.

The altered emphasis John reveals—a shift from disinterested work to work by decisive commitment—is shown in this context also to be a matter of individual resolution. The recluse Sergius illustrates this situation, as well as its ambiguous consequences. His is a blunt and ugly example of responsibility fulfilled by injustice, the hazard of self-righteousness carried to blind extremes.

Like the early anchorites, Sergius had trained under a holy man named Simeon, and the two dwelt together as hermits outside the village of Kalesh, in the territory of Amida.<sup>48</sup> Sergius eventually decided that he should immure himself as a solitary in a separate place, but he felt constrained first to leave the village in good order during his absence. To this end he set about waging a campaign against the sizable Jewish population in the area, determined to leave them entirely subjugated to the Christian locals when he departed:

And every day he used to contend against them as with slayers of God, being fervent in the love of his Lord, and gnashing his teeth, and saying, "These crucifiers of the Son of God should not be allowed to live at all"; and he used to upbraid Christians who had dealings with them in the way of taking and giving.<sup>49</sup>

John portrays a ruthless campaign in which Sergius demolished the Jewish synagogue with all its sacred objects, books, and furniture and then violently opposed the Jews' efforts to rebuild their place of worship. He set up a watch through his disciples, so that even after his retreat to solitude the Jewish community would not be able to establish a gathering place for themselves. They, on their side, tried to stop the holy man's campaign, unsuccessfully appealing by right to the metropolitan church at Amida—to whom they paid dues for protection against such violence—and even resorting to revenge by burning the huts of Sergius' master Simeon, again a failed venture as Sergius soon rebuilt them. John would have us see Sergius' program as so thorough that the Jews remained a broken community long after the holy man had gone into seclusion, "so that during the days of his life the Jews could not raise their head there . . . and so they desisted from building all the days of his life."<sup>50</sup>

According to John, Sergius saw himself as acting in the interests of his community, to better ensure their welfare during his retreat. In fact, although the Jews were an oppressed minority in the Byzantine state, he

had far overstepped the limits of civil law, which did provide protection for Jewish communities and their synagogues. But these laws were grudgingly granted, and Sergius was not only serving the more heartfelt prejudices of the Christian Empire but, further, doing so under the claim of a higher authority.<sup>51</sup> He was hardly the first ascetic to invoke this "higher right" when acting against the Jews; Simeon Stylites himself was said to have vehemently and successfully opposed protective efforts toward the Jews.<sup>52</sup>

Thus for Sergius the life of the recluse was not one of withdrawal from worldly concerns. Even in the solitude of his retreat he kept watch to control Jewish movement in the area; and when the Monophysite persecutions struck that region, he was not long in leaving his sanctuary to make a violent statement against the persecutors in the city of Amida itself.<sup>53</sup> John portrays Sergius as one for whom asceticism was a violent matter: both internally, in the austerity of his own practice, and outwardly, in the literal playing out of his vows. John of Ephesus sought to glorify an active ascetic understanding, which displayed its purpose openly and with resolution and whose impetus was in no way lessened either by its standing in the secular sphere or by its achieving an established institutional form.

## THE MESSAGE IN THE MODEL

By glorifying the ascetic's use of spiritual power in the temporal world, John is not advocating a "secularization" of a mode of action originally seen as an act of grace. Rather, John's ascetics display an outward manifestation of their inward spirituality—and here the crucial issue is touched because John's *Lives* differ from those written by Palladius and Theodoret in a most fundamental way. For John writes at the time when the Chalcedonian-Monophysite dispute had reached its highest pitch. It is a time when the needs of the temporal world have become so pressing that the ascetic cannot afford the luxury of complete withdrawal. Moreover, it has become essential that ascetic involvement, as an act of grace, be revitalized beyond the complacency of asceticism as institution. There is rarely a chapter of John's collection that does not mention the Monophysite persecutions, the refugees, the exiled, or the martyred. Further, the anger of the persecuted ascetics was compounded all the more by their wider circumstances: for the Byzantine East, the sixth century brought its succession of famine, plague, and war. The ascetic response to these capricious natural and political crises was transformed with new meaning in the context of persecution.

John's *Lives* are charged with politics: the affairs of the empire are inescapable; responses to them are mandatory. Time after time John reiterates the rhetoric of martyrdom. This is not the language that praises a distant past, as in the tales of martyrdom that Palladius tells.<sup>54</sup> Nor is it the language spoken in the safely removed tone that Theodoret uses in his stories about the Arian persecutions.<sup>55</sup> John merges the symbols of the martyr who dies for the faith and the ascetic whose life manifests the same strength. Martyr and ascetic are here a physically fused presence.

These ascetics are not dead to the world, nor is such a state the goal of their religious practice. John takes care to point out that strangers could not be admitted to the Amidan monasteries without swearing the required oath to anathematize the "heresy" of Chalcedon.<sup>56</sup> And Elijah of Dara impressed John highly "as he stood and uttered anathemas and called the Chalcedonian bishops as well as those who wielded the authority of the crown, to their faces impious men, renegades, and new Jews."<sup>57</sup>

Palladius and Theodoret had both written their hagiographical collections in contexts of ecclesiastical battle. But Palladius deals in his writing with the issues of his day by denying that there is any disagreement; his *Historia Lausiaca* describes a peaceful picture that hardly indicates the state of the Egyptian church at the time.<sup>58</sup> Theodoret, for his part, wrote the *Historia religiosa* during a period of relative tranquility in his otherwise volatile career. His motives for writing it have been variously interpreted, but the work itself is calm and dignified and praises an asceticism of previously questionable validity in a literary format that grants it admirable respect.<sup>59</sup> In both these cases, the polemical interests of the authors play an understated part in their hagiographical stories and at times are barely discernible. Nor is there a sense of unified ascetic vision that speaks to personal vows, public suffering, and religious unrest such as that portrayed by John of Ephesus.

Similar contrasts are apparent in the kind of attention, or lack thereof, given to the matter of lapses in ascetic commitment. Theodoret presents a portrait of holy men and women who never fail, figures of seamless perfection, and hence removes us from any real contact with them. Palladius, from the opposite perspective, often recounts stories of fallen monks or nuns to counteract the sin of pride so prevalent among ascetics, and perhaps also to acknowledge (sometimes compassionately, albeit grudgingly so) how genuinely difficult the monastic vocation could be. John of Ephesus gives little time to such stories, but not because he presents a perfect picture, such as Theodoret depicts. For example, John tells the story of a monk who stole the books and relics of another solitary. However, remorse soon followed, and John himself was the media-

tor in the reconciliation.<sup>60</sup> It is a humane presentation, hardly a case of debauchery such as Palladius was prone to dwell upon; and it does not differ in tone from the rest of John's collection. He is too focused on the pragmatic needs of his world and the ascetic involvement in them for such distractions.

Nor does John express concern for the sin of *accidie*—the boredom one had always to fight in the Egyptian desert or Cappadocian monastery. Palladius knew the dangers of an asceticism so monotonous that this sin could lead to madness.<sup>61</sup> John's ascetic vision led to opposite results: Mare of Beth Urtaye "used to behave with great and measureless arrogance, and he was haughty";<sup>62</sup> but for Mare asceticism proved a cure. Not only did it redeem his disposition, it further enabled him to endure the persecutions courageously.

Again, the sometimes fantastic miracles recalled by Palladius and Theodoret have no place in John's work. Miracles there are, in abundance, but of a less histrionic kind: healings, or feats of endurance. John's holy men and women are as much victims of their times as the suppliants they serve; they, too, suffer from plague and famine, the destruction of invading troops, and above all the hardships of exile and imprisonment by persecutors. They have no wondrous solutions for the hardships at hand, except to work as best they can to meet the needs of their populace. Lust, boredom, and miracles, these are themes that do not concern John and for which he has no time. The imperatives of the present world are of too great an import.

John's *Lives* present an institutionalized form of the holy person's cult that resulted in an increased acceptability, accessibility, and range of activity for the ascetic. At the same time, he sets his subjects in the context of a church rent by persecutions and separatist activities, and of a society engulfed by tragic conditions. In such circumstances, the old rules and the old values no longer work. A different kind of ministry of service and of action is needed, and, in the midst of such chaos, a fluidity in the existing structures becomes possible.

John's arena is twofold: the intimate locality of Amida and its territory, and the vast size of the wider Byzantine Empire. His sense of purpose can in fact be seen to emanate from the microcosm of human experience and holy presence he witnessed in the small world of Amida. The vision John developed in Amida, and its extension outward in the larger empire, must be considered first, before turning to the implications involved.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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For dictionaries, encyclopedias, and collections, full details may be found in the Bibliography.

AER	<i>American Ecclesiastical Review</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AMS	<i>Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum</i>
Anal. Boll.	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>Annales: e.s.c.</i>	<i>Annales: économies, sociétés, et civilisations</i>
BEO	<i>Bulletin d'études orientales</i>
BHG	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca</i> , 3d ed., edited by F. Halkin; and idem, <i>Novum Auctarium BHG</i>
BHO	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis</i> , edited by P. Peeters
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syrii</i> (unless otherwise noted)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
CSL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum</i>
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i>



DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DR	<i>Downside Review</i>
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique</i>
ECR	<i>Eastern Churches Review</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HE	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JME	<i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
NT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OLP	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PETSE	<i>Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , edited by J. P. Migne
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
POC	<i>Proche-Orient Chrétien</i>
RBK	<i>Reallexicon zur Byzantinischen Kunst</i>
RE	<i>Paulys Realenzyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
REJ	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
ROC	<i>Revue de l'orient chrétien</i>
SCH	<i>Studies in Church History</i> , edited by D. Baker, G. J. Cuming, S. Mews, et alii
SLNPNF	<i>Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>

SSTS	Studies Supplementary to Sobornost
Sub. Hag.	Subsidia Hagiographica
TU	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
ZK	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>

Note on primary sources: For individual saints' lives not in major collections (e.g., John of Ephesus, *Lives*), see under *Vita* \_\_\_\_\_.

II. "Let Your Light So Shine Before Men":  
The Ascetic Vision

1. Cf. Brown, "Rise and Function."
2. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 1, PO 17:5–18.
3. *Ibid.*, 9.
4. *Ibid.*, 15.
5. *Ibid.*, 12.
6. John states that Habib "travelled in all the districts of Syria," *ibid.*, 11.
7. "Life of Z'ura" is John's second chapter, *ibid.*, 18–35; however, Z'ura's discipleship is also stressed in the "Life of Habib," for example, *ibid.*, 10, 17. See also Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.23.
8. *Lives*, 2, PO 17:20. For the ramifications of the master-disciple relationship, see Brown, "Saint as Exemplar"; and Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, 188–91.
9. *Lives*, 12, PO 17:181.
10. *Lives*, 11, PO 17:158–66.
11. *Ibid.*, 164.
12. Theodoret, *Historia religiosa* 26.2, 12; and the Syriac *Vita Simeonis Stylitae*, AMS 4:571–77.
13. *Lives*, 8, PO 17:124–35.
14. *Ibid.*, 129.
15. *Ibid.*, 130.
16. Cf. *Vita Antonii*, chap. 14. See Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 94.
17. *Lives*, 7, PO 17:118–24.
18. *Ibid.*, 120.
19. *Ibid.*, 123. A similar incident is recounted in the "Life of Habib," *Lives*, 1, PO 17:12; but the story seems to fit more appropriately here, in the "Life of Abraham."
20. *Lives*, 31, PO 18:576–85.
21. *Ibid.*, 577.
22. *Lives*, 30, PO 18:575–76.
23. For example, Brown, "Rise and Function"; and Patlagean, "À Byzance."
24. *Lives*, 15, PO 17:220–28.
25. *Ibid.*, 223–24.
26. *Ibid.*, 224.
27. *Ibid.*, 22, PO 17:299–300.
28. *Ibid.*, 299.
29. Compare the panic Theodoret depicts in villages that did not have a holy man or woman to look after them. One village went so far as to kidnap a neighboring town's recluse, who was shortly thereafter kidnapped back. See Theodoret, *Historia religiosa* 19.
30. *Lives*, 19, PO 17:278–83.
31. *Ibid.*, 18, PO 17:260–65. Cf. *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, ed. and trans. A. Vööbus, 33 (canon 26).

32. *Ibid.*, 7, PO 17:118–24.
33. Cf. Brown, "Saint as Exemplar," on the dissemination of a central value system.
34. *Lives*, 38, PO 18:641–45.
35. *Ibid.*, 3, PO 17:40; see also 17:36–55.
36. *Ibid.*, 35, PO 18:612; see also 18:607–23.
37. Theodoret, *Historia religiosa* 26.26.
38. *Lives*, 4, PO 17:56–84. Maro also appears during the Monophysite persecutions in *Lives*, 5, PO 17:98–101.
39. *Ibid.*, 4, PO 17:83–84.
40. *Ibid.*, 60.
41. See the discussion of this incident in chap. 1, pp. 28–29. Compare the first miracle worked by Theodore of Sykeon, for which the suppliant had to explain to Theodore how to do it; *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, in *Three Byzantine Saints*, chap. 18, 99–100.
42. *Lives*, 4, PO 17.64.
43. *Ibid.*, 64–65.
44. *Ibid.*, 65–67.
45. *Ibid.*, 70.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Cf. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, esp. 99–113.
48. *Lives*, 5, PO 17:84–111.
49. *Ibid.*, 90–91.
50. *Ibid.*, 93. This incident is discussed in both Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, chap. 7; and Segal, "Jews of North Mesopotamia," 60–61.
51. On the position of the Jews, see Segal, "Jews of North Mesopotamia"; Jones, *Later Roman Empire* 2:944–50; and A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971), esp. 19–41. Sharf comments on the anomalous legal status of the Jewish religion, which was explicitly permitted as a deliberate Christian policy: "Judaism had to be preserved as a living testimony to the Christian interpretation of the scriptures, to the victory of Christianity. Jews were thus sharply distinguished from both pagans and heretics—who had no rights and no civil status" (Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 20). Cf. Procopius, *Anecdota* 28.16–18, on Justinian's persecution of the Jews.
52. AMS 4:636–38. Cf. for example, Nau, "Deux épisodes"; and Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.15.
53. *Lives*, 5, PO 17:95–103; discussed in chap. 3, pp. 72–73.
54. For example, Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 3.
55. For example, Theodoret, *Historia religiosa* 1, 2.
56. *Lives*, 29, PO 18:563.
57. *Ibid.*, 30, PO 18:575–76.
58. See, for example, Chitty, *Desert a City*; and Hunt, "Palladius of Helenopolis."
59. Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*, chap. 5, supposes that Theodoret may have

written the *Historia religiosa* partly to regain favor with Syrian ascetics, and partly as a reaction against Egyptian monasticism and thus against Cyril of Alexandria. Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*, disagrees altogether and does not believe that a political motive lies behind the work.

60. *Lives*, 32, PO 18:586–92. There are two other instances of misbehaving monks: two monks deceived by a vision from Satan, who immediately seek confession and penance when they realize what has happened; and a monk who joined the Amidan monasteries without following canonical procedure but who repented and received absolution before death. See *Lives*, 15, PO 17:220–28; 18, PO 17:260–65. Both instances are more fully discussed here later.

61. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 25, 53, 58.

62. *Lives*, 9, PO 17:135, see also 17:135–37.

### III. Amida: The Measure of Madness

1. See the articles "Amid," *DHGE* 2:1237–49 (Karalevsky); *RBK* 1:133–37 (Restle); and *RE* 1:1833 (Baumgartner). For an archaeological overview of the city, see Van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*. On the military and trading importance of the city, see Dilleman, *Haute mésopotamie*; and especially, N. Pigulevskaja, *Villes de l'état iranien*. Segal, "Mesopotamian Communities," 109–39, is most helpful for setting Amida in a cultural and political context.

2. Van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 163; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* 1:228–29, 2:37–39. Vööbus considers the background of Persian-Byzantine hostilities, as well as the constant invasions in this area, crucial to the development of asceticism in north Mesopotamia.

3. Sozomen, *HE* 3.14; John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 58, PO 19:208; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* 2:231–32. Van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 163–65, cites the attestations of Amida's early importance as a Christian center. Evidence for the origins of asceticism at Amida is sparse and obscure, as for Mesopotamia in general; cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* 2.

4. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 58, PO 19:207–9.

5. *Ibid.*, 209.

6. This account follows John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 58, PO 19:209–12.

7. *Ibid.*, 212.

8. *Ibid.*

9. For example, John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 17, PO 17:249–50; 19–20, PO 17:266–83; 24, PO 18:521; and 35, PO 18:607–23. See also Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* 2:233; and Van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 165.

10. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.2; "Joshua the Stylite," *Chronicle XXXIII–XLIX*; *Chronicon Edessenum*, ed. and trans. I. Guidi, LXXVI–LXXIX; Jacob of Edessa, *Chronicon*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, 314–15; *Chronicon anonymum* 846, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, 218–19; pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 3–4 (John of Ephesus); Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.7. See, for example, Se-

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